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Ministry of Attorney General

PROVINCE TO INTRODUCE KOMAGATA MARU APOLOGY MOTION

VICTORIA – Government House Leader Michael de Jong announced today that the Province will introduce in the Legislature and endorse a motion to apologize for the events of July 23, 1914, when 376 passengers of the Komagata Maru were denied entry to Canada. The motion will be debated in the House May 23, the anniversary of the ship arriving in Vancouver harbour.

"This motion acknowledges the suffering the passengers of the Komagata Maru experienced as a consequence of racist attitudes of the day towards people from India and expresses deep regret that those passengers were turned away," Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism Wally Oppal said.

On May 23, 1914, 376 people from India arrived in Canadian waters on board the Komagata Maru, a Japanese tramp steamer hired by a Sikh merchant.

The ship remained anchored off Vancouver harbour while Canadian immigration officials deliberated on whether to allow the passengers to enter Canada. The vessel returned to Hong Kong July 23, 1914 with all but 22 of the original passengers, who were allowed to leave the ship, after the other passengers were denied entry by Canada.

Premier Gordon Campbell has previously expressed regret on behalf of the Province, for the events that led to the Komagata Maru residents being turned away. The Province contributed $20,000 to the Komagata Maru Foundation of Canada in 1990 for an historical and educational video to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the Komagata Maru.

"Today, this country and, particularly this province, embrace immigration and immigrants, no matter their point of origin or ethnicity," said Dave S. Hayer, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism and Immigration. "This motion is another step forward to right the wrongs of yesterday."

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